

Embarrassment Probable

Undoubtedly "The Invisible Government" is causing embarrassment. It chronicles not a few of the ineptitudes of secret agents and suggests that some CIA men have undermined the authority of U.S. ambassadors in critical situations abroad.

In the sense that much of "The Invisible Government's" material is not known widely and no doubt carries some government security classification, it can be said to contain security violations. But in the sense that the bulk of its information is available generally to certain sophisticated persons and to newsmen with time to do some checking around (and so, presumably, to America's enemies), it seems unlikely that the book breaches security. However, few persons beyond members of the top secret "54-12" special group, which oversees "special operations" of U.S. intelligence for the President, are in a position to know how much damage, if any, "The Invisible Government" has done.

"The Invisible Government" has some value to hostile powers in propaganda attacks against the U.S. But in this regard, it ranks far below the downing of a U-2 plane over Russia and the failure of a U.S.-supported invasion at the Bay of Pigs.

The hand of the CIA rarely has been concealed from our friends or our adversaries in the crises, coups and intrigues it has engineered in Laos, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Guatemala, Iran, Burma, Cuba. . . . The American people are the ones who have lacked a survey of the \$4 billion-a-year business, with the CIA at its center, which employs some 200,000 persons and conducts the clandestine policies of the United States. Some of these policies, as the authors note, constitute acts of war, involve our national prestige and affect the welfare of all 190 million of us.

A debate on the role the Invisible Government should play in the protection of the nation is overdue. Wise and Ross have assembled enough information to support their suggestion that the intelligence services, under cover of the Cold War, have achieved a quasi-independent status of their own. If this is so, it is worth worrying about.

"The Invisible Government" is a book that leaves a citizen older but wiser. It provides a sophisticating experience and, as such, should raise the quality of understanding of the conduct of foreign affairs in the 20th Century.